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Friday, 25 February 2011, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mrs. Viotti	(Brazil)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I should like to invite the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to welcome the presence at this meeting of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whom I now invite to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: I wish to thank the Council for the opportunity to brief it this afternoon. On our agenda is the issue of peace and security in Africa. Before we discuss the deeply disturbing situation in Libya, allow me to quickly update the Council on developments elsewhere in Africa.

We are all gravely concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Côte d'Ivoire, as the Council has perhaps seen in my statement earlier today. Clashes between security forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo and armed groups opposing them have resulted in significant civilian fatalities in several areas of Abidjan.

We are also receiving reports of renewed fighting in the west of the country. Once again, I urge the security forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo to stop the violence. The Government has a clear responsibility to protect the civilian population. Its armed forces must carry out those responsibilities professionally and impartially. I repeat my call in my statement of Friday, 18 February, to Mr. Gbagbo's camp to end the ongoing military mobilization, the attacks against the civilian population and the obstruction of our peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). I am very concerned that Côte d'Ivoire is on the brink of sliding back into civil war. Time is slipping away. If the African Union High-level Panel does not move decisively to find a solution, all of its work could be overtaken by events.

I note with special concern that Mr. Gbagbo's forces continue to attack civilians and violate human rights even as the Panel made its recent visit. I understand that the Panel will meet again in Nouakchott, Mauritania, in the coming days. The Ivorian people and the international community are counting on them to find a peaceful way out of the crisis.

At the same time, UNOCI is striving to keep open channels of communication with President Outtara's Government and Mr. Gbagbo's camp alike. UNOCI also continues to monitor and investigate human rights violations and to conduct patrols to protect civilians.

As I have said before, Côte d'Ivoire is an important test for democracy throughout Africa. More than 20 elections are scheduled to be held throughout the continent this year. As elsewhere, the region's leaders must listen to their people. They must respect fundamental human rights. When it comes to democracy and free elections, the will of the people must prevail.

We meet at a critical moment — potentially a defining moment — for the Arab world. Fundamental issues of peace and stability are at stake, most immediately at this moment in Libya.

Since my Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lynn Pascoe, briefed the Council earlier this week (see S/PV.6486), there have been continuing reports of violence and the indiscriminate use of force. Estimates indicate that more than 1,000 people have been killed. The eastern part of the country is reported to be under the control of opposition elements, who have taken over arms and ammunition from weapon depots. There are daily clashes in at least three cities near Tripoli. The streets of the capital are largely deserted. People cannot leave their houses for fear of being shot by Government forces or militias. Colonel Al-Qadhafi's supporters are reportedly conducting house-by-house searches and arrests. According to some reports, they have even gone into hospitals to kill wounded opponents.

Today, clashes broke out again, with high casualties reported. In their public statements, Colonel Al-Qadhafi and members of his family have continued to threaten citizens with a civil war and the possibility of mass killing if the protests continue. There are other allegations of the killing of soldiers who refused to fire upon their countrymen.

Let us speak frankly: these accounts from the press, human rights groups and civilians on the ground raise grave concerns about the nature and scale of the conflict. They include allegations of indiscriminate killings, arbitrary arrests, the shooting of peaceful demonstrators and the detention and torture of the opposition and the use of foreign mercenaries. We are also hearing reports of women and children being among the victims, as well as reports of indiscriminate attacks on foreigners believed to be mercenaries. We know from the Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross that there are dangerous impediments to medical treatment and access for humanitarian workers. We do not have conclusive proof, but the reports appear to be credible and consistent.

I strongly believe that the first obligation of the international community is to do everything possible to ensure the immediate protection of civilians at demonstrable risk. Indeed, if further proof is required, it should be sought simultaneously with measures to afford protection.

Today, the Human Rights Council convened a special session that was requested by nearly 50 Member States, both members and non-members of the Council. It is the first time that a member of the Human Rights Council is the subject of a special session. I welcome the strong stand taken by the Human Rights Council today to establish an independent international committee of inquiry, and I pledge my full support. I also note that the Human Rights Council recommended that the General Assembly consider suspending Libya from the Human Rights Council.

In that regard, I would like to underscore the statement of Ms. Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights, to the Human Rights Council. She reminded member States that, when a State manifestly fails to protect its population from serious international crimes, the international community has the responsibility to step in and take protective action in a collective, timely and decisive manner.

Let me also point out that there are also serious indications of a growing crisis of refugees and displaced persons. Staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) along the Tunisia-Libya border have reported a steady flow of people fleeing the country since 22 February. Some 22,000 have fled through Tunisia, and a reported 15,000 through Egypt. However, they fear that much larger numbers of residents and migrant workers are in fact trapped and unable to leave for safety.

Many of those crossing the border have reported to UNHCR officials that the journey was terrifying. There are widespread reports of refugees being harassed and threatened with guns and knives. It is crucial for humanitarian agencies to have access to the border regions. It is also important for the neighbouring States, including Europe, to keep their borders open to people fleeing Libya. We anticipate the situation to worsen, as the World Food Programme is concerned about Libya's food supplies.

We have seen strong statements from many international leaders and international organizations, among them the League of Arab States, the European Union and the African Union. They have called for an immediate end to the violence and condemned what appeared to be gross violations of human rights. In my conversations with the leaders of the region and the world, and in my public and private statements, I have spoken out bluntly and repeatedly. The violence must stop. Those responsible for so brutally shedding the blood of innocents must be punished. Fundamental human rights must be respected.

My Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect have reminded the national authorities in Libya, as well as in other countries facing large-scale popular protests, that the heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit pledged to protect populations by preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as their incitement. The challenge for us now is how to provide real protection and do all we can to halt the ongoing violence.

As the Council looks to its next steps, I urge it to consider a wide range of options for action. Some of the proposals being considered by the Council include the imposition of trade and financial sanctions, including targeted measures against the leadership, such as a ban on travel and the freezing of financial assets. Some Member States call for a comprehensive arms embargo. Others draw our attention to the clear and egregious violations of human rights taking place in Libya and urge the Security Council to take effective action to ensure real accountability.

It is time for the Security Council to consider concrete action. The hours and days ahead will be decisive for Libyans and their country, with equally important implications for the wider region. The statements and actions of the Security Council are eagerly awaited and will be closely followed throughout the region. Whatever its course, let us be mindful of the urgency of the moment. In these circumstances the loss of time means more loss of lives. On Monday, I will travel to Washington to discuss these and other matters with President Obama.

Allow me to touch on two other developments regarding peace and security on the continent.

First, with respect to the situation in Darfur, the African Union-United Nations Joint Chief Mediator continues to engage the Government of the Sudan and the two leading rebel factions — the Justice and Equality Movement and the Liberation and Justice Movement — in Doha. The parties are currently reviewing a draft agreement. It is essential for the international community to step up its engagement and help the parties reach an inclusive and comprehensive peace.

I am also concerned about continued hostilities between the Government and the tactical alliance of rebel groups in Northern Darfur, which has reportedly displaced large numbers of civilians. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur is dispatching patrols to verify those reports and has increased its presence to protect civilians in the area, as well as to provide water and food to those who have been displaced.

Finally, I have been meeting today with President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and President Ali Bongo Ondimba of the Gabonese Republic. At our invitation, the two leaders have come together at the United Nations in an effort to resolve the long-standing border dispute between the two countries. I am pleased to report that the two leaders have reiterated their commitment to submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice and to make every effort to conclude the mediation as soon as possible.

I want to underscore that they will have the full support of the United Nations as they work together to find a solution. This is an important demonstration of statesmanship on both sides.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Shalgham (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to express our gratitude to you, Madame President, for calling this meeting on the situation in my country and the events unfolding there. I would also like to commend the Secretary-General for his concern about the situation in my country.

Pol Pot, head of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, was asked why he executed one third of his people. He said he did it because of the people. Before invading the Soviet Union, Hitler recalled Rommel from Libya and told him, "General, I intend to invade the Soviet Union". Rommel told him, "Operation Barbarossa will cost us 2 million lives". Hitler responded, "What does it matter if 2 million Germans die in service to the glory of the Führer?"

What is taking place in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is indeed very dangerous. On 15 February, a group of peaceful civilians protested, calling for the release of a lawyer named Tarbel who was representing the families of 2,000 prisoners who were killed in the Abu Salim prison in 1996. This group faced gunfire aimed at their heads and chests, as if the soldiers who opened fire did not know that human beings have heads, hearts and legs, or that there are other parts than can be shot at, that there are such things as tear gas bombs or roadblocks that can contain demonstrations.

Libyans are asking for democracy; they are asking for progress; they are asking for freedom; and they are asking for their rights. They demonstrated peacefully. They did not throw a single stone. They were killed. What did Brother Muammar Al-Qadhafi say? He said that these people were using hallucinogens. These tens of thousands of people would need mountains of such pills to lose their minds in such a way. One million turned out in Benghazi yesterday. A pile of pills the size of the Akhdar Mountains would not be enough for that many people.

Muammar Al-Qadhafi and his sons are telling Libyans: "Either I rule you or I kill you". That much is clear this evening after dozens of our brothers were killed in Tajura and in eastern Tripoli. He gave a speech to a crowd of children who were brought in

from asylums and soldiers dressed in civilian clothes. He told them "I will burn Libya; I will distribute arms to the tribes. Libya will run red with blood". Is this for glory, or is it for the people? Muammar Al-Qadhafi cannot give a single weapon to any person in Libya, because they will not be used for him, they will be used against him.

I regret being in this position. The first time I heard Muammar Al-Qadhafi, he was addressing a secondary school, in the south, in 1959. He was talking about how he wanted freedom for the Congo. In 1960, I listened to him denounce the French nuclear tests in Algeria. In 1961, I listened to him speak out against the separation of Syria and Egypt. Today, I listened to him telling his people "Either I rule over you or I destroy you."

Fear not, Libya is united. Libya will remain united. Libya will be a progressive State. But I say to my brother Al-Qadhafi, leave the Libyans alone. However many of these steadfast people you kill — these people that offered up half of their own numbers to fight Mussolini and Graziani, and this when they were barefoot, hungry and poor — they will not surrender. Libyans will not surrender. Omar Mukhtar said it best: "We will not surrender. Either we achieve victory or we die." We will not surrender. Victory, or death.

When I was a member of the Security Council, representing my country, I talked openly about the murders we saw in Gaza. Muammar Al-Qadhafi said they were followers of Bin Laden. I ask my brother, "Is a six-month-old child who was killed a follower of Bin Laden?" Libya was established by a resolution of the United Nations. Please, United Nations, save Libya. No to bloodshed. No to the killing of innocents. We want a swift, decisive and courageous resolution.

The President: There are no other speakers inscribed on my list.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.